

# **MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES February 4, 2008**

Chair Jeffrey Cammack called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:00 pm in Room 438 of the Maine State House. Members present included Stephan Bunker, Chief John Dean, Chief Darrel Fournier, Gerry Gay, Ron Green, Alan Johnston, Geoffrey Maker, Alex McPhedran, Senator Richard Nass, Harty Norris, Vicki Schmidt, and Susan Pinette (staff). Members absent included Representative Patricia Blanchette, Jay Bradshaw, Representative Dean Cray, Ed Marks, Robert McAleer, Representative Benjamin Pratt, Charles Soltan and Senator Ethan Strimling. Guests of the Fire Commission included William Vickerson, Counsel for the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters and Gene Cote of the Maine Fire Instructors and Rescue Educators (MEFIRE).

***A motion by Darrel Fournier, seconded by Richard Nass, to accept the minutes of the January 7, 2008 as amended.*** The motion passed unanimously. The amended minutes will read as follows:

1) Authorize up to \$3000.00 to hire an individual to explore other grant proposals and prepare a public relations report to move the process forward.  
(page 2)

## Committee Reports

The Spring Conference Committee reported plans are being finalized for the March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> conference. Final copies of the attendee and exhibitor packets were distributed. These packets will be mailed out by February 10<sup>th</sup>. Fire Commission members praised Maine Municipal Association (MMA) for the professional job designing and printing the conference materials. Members were reminded that the roundtable discussion is scheduled for Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:30pm. Members agreed that in place of the regular March meeting, the Fire Commission would hold a short business meeting following the roundtable discussion on March 13<sup>th</sup>.

The Best Practices Committee announced that Dead River Company was presented a Best Practice Award at the State House during the kick-off for the Ban Novelty Lighter campaign. Dead River Company was cited for volunteering to remove novelty lighters from their stores.

***A motion by Jeff Cammack, seconded by Gerry Gay, that the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission award the Dead River Company a Best Practices Award for their leadership and voluntary compliance in removing novelty lighters from their stores in Maine.***  
The motion passed unanimously.

The Best Practices Committee also informed members that Hermon Fire Department would receive their Best Practices Award at the Spring Conference. The Fire Commission voted in January to award the Hermon F.D. a Best Practices Award. The Hermon Fire Department was cited for their recent program that provided and installed free smoke detectors with ten-year batteries to the residents of Hermon.

The Elections Committee will nominate their candidates for officers at the meeting that will follow the roundtable discussion on March 13<sup>th</sup>. According to Fire Commission bylaws, the April meeting is designated as the Annual Meeting and elections of Fire Commission officers are held.

#### Old Business

The current status of several bills were discussed including L.D. 1981 "*An Act To Exempt Certain Facilities from Increased Fire Sprinkler Requirements*", L.D. 2081 "*An Act To Prohibit the Retail Sale and Distribution of Novelty Lighters*" (Emergency) and L.D. 2177 "*An Act To Correct the Law Regarding Portability of Pension Benefits for Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters*". Also mentioned were two Joint Orders -H.P. 1511 "*Directing the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety To Study the Creation of a Catastrophic Illness Fund To Help Firefighters, Police Officers, Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics and Their Families*" and H.P.1512 "*Requiring a Review of Issues Concerning the Protection of Emergency Medical Services Personnel*". L.D. 1981 and L.D. 2081 were both referred to the CJ/PS Committee. Both bills had public hearings and work sessions. Members were informed that there was confusion regarding the discussion of rulemaking when CJ/PS discussed L.D. 1981. Discussion on L.D. 2081 was positive and the State Fire Marshal's Office is pleased with their educational campaign and expects the bill to pass with minimal change. L.D. 2177 was referred to the Labor Committee and correct language to the original bill that was passed last session.

***A motion by Darrel Fournier, seconded by Gerry Gay, that the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission send a letter of support for L.D 2177 "An Act To Correct the Law Regarding Portability of Pension Benefits for Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters".*** The motion passed unanimously.

## New Business

When the Maine Legislature established the Fire Commission in 2000, it originally charged the Fire Commission with providing recommendations for recruitment and retention of volunteers, including a length-of-service incentive program for volunteer firefighters. The Fire Commission has studied and reviewed several options since 2000. In 2003, the Fire Commission contracted with Penflex, Inc. of New York to conduct an actuarial study on the feasibility of providing a pension type program to call and volunteer firefighters in Maine. Penflex, Inc. submitted their final report to the Fire Commission in April 2003. For several years the Fire Commission has discussed submitting legislation based on the recommendations in the Penflex report.

Fire Commission members received a copy of a bill submitted to the Maine Legislature in 1991. The proposed bill suggested a method to provide retirement benefits to call and volunteer firefighters. The original bill was voted out of committee with a recommendation of “ought to pass as amended”, but ultimately died on the Appropriations table. Fire Commission members generally approved of the bill’s language but acknowledged some redrafting would be necessary, including incorporating the Penflex recommendations and revising the numbers to 2008 figures. The issue of who will pay- the state or the communities- will also need to be resolved. Members questioned the option of moving forward in this session or waiting until the 124<sup>th</sup> Legislature. The consensus was to wait until 2009 but to begin talking to the legislative candidates, providing them with information and asking for their support.

Further discussion included the crucial issue of losing volunteers in many Maine communities. Fire Commission members expressed concern that if the level of volunteers continues to drop, the safety of the public is affected. Members felt this is a concern that the Fire Commission is obligated to bring to the Legislature and the Governor. Members suggested organizing an all day meeting of fire service members, legislators, municipal officials and others to begin discussions. Florian Hall was a suggested site for the retreat and lunch would be provided to attendees. The agenda would include outlining the problems and developing proposals to the Legislature. Other suggestions included looking at other states’ programs and funding methods.

***A motion by Darrel Fournier, seconded by Gerry Gay, that the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission host a one day retreat and invite representatives from Maine’s fire service, state and municipal government, the Legislature, insurance industry and others to discuss recruitment and retention issues, focusing on submitting legislation in 2009.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Several members of the Fire Commission have agreed to serve on the Recruitment/Retention Committee and move this issue forward. The members include Jeff Cammack, Darrel Fournier, Jeff Maker, Richard Nass, Ben Pratt, Vicki Schmidt and Charles Soltan.

Members were reminded that the Legislative Breakfast at the Senator Inn in Augusta is scheduled for Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> from 7am –10:00am. All members are encouraged to attend.

The Fire Commission's newsletter has been well received so far. Copies will be available at the Legislative Breakfast and also distributed to Legislators at their desks. Suggestions for items to be included in the newsletter should be directed to Vicki Schmidt.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Cammack adjourned the meeting at 3:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette  
Staff

### Meeting Schedule and Dates of Interest

<u>Monday, April 7, 2008</u>	ANNUAL MEETING**	State House	1:00pm
<u>Monday, May 5, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, June 2, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, July 7, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, August 4, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, September 8, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, October 6, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, November 3, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm
<u>Monday, November 4, 2008</u>	<b>ELECTION DAY</b>		
<u>Monday, December 1, 2008</u>	MEETING	Florian Hall	1:00pm

To be scheduled:

Retreat on Recruitment and Retention (May 2008)  
Visit to the New Hampshire Fire Academy

\*\* Election of Fire Commission Officers

